

# The pseudo-left stabs Assange in the back

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11 June 2018

Journalist Julian Assange, who exposed US government war crimes, CIA conspiracies and rampant political corruption, has had all his connections with the outside world severed for ten weeks.

Assange has been effectively imprisoned in the Ecuadorian Embassy for nearly six years, forced to flee trumped-up allegations of rape, which have since been dropped, and the threats of the US government to extradite and prosecute him on equally false espionage charges.

In addition to being denied visitors and adequate medical care, the Ecuadorian embassy has severed his internet access and jammed all his electronic communications, leaving him cut off from the outside world.

With one of the world's most famous political prisoners facing such intolerable conditions, and confronted with such imminent danger, one would expect that all political organizations that consider themselves left-wing would rush to his defense.

However, despite initially voicing opposition to Assange's hounding by US authorities, the entire gamut of the middle-class "left" has either ignored, downplayed or supported Assange's persecution.

The pseudo-left groups have followed the lead set by the *Guardian*, which, after publishing WikiLeaks' early exposures in 2010, and working with NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden in 2013, has been at the forefront of the demand for Assange's expulsion from the Ecuadorian Embassy.

In August 2010, the newspaper published a defense of Assange, by Women Against Rape, authored by Katrin Axelsson and Lisa Longstaff, which asked, "Does anyone really believe that extraditing Julian Assange will strengthen women against rape? And do those supporting his extradition to Sweden care if he is then extradited to the US and tortured for telling the public what we need to know about those who govern us?"

However, in the subsequent eight years, the paper has made an about-face, serving as an attack dog for the American and British governments' efforts to expel Assange from the Ecuadorian Embassy.

In May, the *Guardian* published unsubstantiated allegations that Assange "violated" the embassy's communications system and "apparently" read "confidential diplomatic traffic," which WikiLeaks denounced as an "anonymous libel."

## *International Viewpoint*

*International Viewpoint*, the online journal of the Pabloite United Secretariat, has only published one somewhat favorable statement on Assange over the past eight years, in September 2013, consisting of a single paragraph in an article focusing on Edward Snowden, re-posted from *Against the Current*. That paragraph accepted the legitimacy of the call for Assange to "face questioning on sexual assault allegations in Sweden," but hedged that such a call is "impossible" because of the "near-certainty that once there, he'd be trundled off to the United States."

Since that time, the site has, despite making four passing references to Assange, made no further mention of his detention, much less of Ecuador's moves to silence him.

## **Socialist Alternative (US)**

Socialist Alternative, likewise, moved from publishing a defense of Assange to silence on his imprisonment. In December 2010, the organization declared, "Whatever the motivations are behind the Swedish sex crimes charges, the fact that the U.S. government would use these charges as a lever to attack freedom of information is shameful."

By August 2012, the newspaper was writing that the "serious allegations of rape" against Assange "must be investigated." It added, "US imperialism's hunt for Assange does not mean that he is innocent of the accusations by the two women in Sweden."

After this, Socialist Alternative has not even mentioned Assange once since 2014, much less called for his freedom.

### **International Socialist Organization (US)**

While the International Socialist Organization (ISO) initially defended Assange against the trumped-up rape allegations that were an integral part of the US campaign against him, the group came to embrace these allegations in 2012, and, having done so, has maintained a guilty silence on his imprisonment since 2013.

In 2010, the ISO's *Socialist Worker* published a defense of Assange, declaring that "international leaders—who care little for women's rights in the best of times—are using the very serious allegations of rape and sexual assault as a cover for their drive to prosecute Assange for his work with WikiLeaks."

The ISO concluded, "we must stand in defense of the right of Julian Assange, Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks to expose the crimes committed by the U.S.," adding that the "prosecution of Assange is part of a government war on dissent."

In 2011, the ISO defended Assange against charges of rape, declaring that it is "impossible to take the allegations against Assange at face value."

But by August 2012, the ISO had changed its tune. "On the face of it," it declared, "the difficulty arises from an inability to walk and chew gum at the same time. That is: it is surely quite possible to take these rape allegations against Assange seriously, and not participate in typical patriarchal denigration of women reporting rape, while at the same time taking the U.S. threat to Assange seriously and supporting efforts to resist that."

But in fact, it proved impossible for the ISO to "walk and chew gum at the same time." Their embrace of the fraudulent allegations against the journalist were nothing but the prelude to their wholesale abandonment of Assange's defense, and their de facto alliance with the American state in seeking his arrest, trial and imprisonment.

The abandonment of Assange by the middle-class "left" corresponded with significant political shifts. These groups fully embraced US imperialism with Barack Obama's wars for regime change in Libya and Syria beginning in 2011.

That year, "left" academic Juan Cole pronounced

NATO's efforts at "getting rid of Qaddafi's murderous regime" to be "worth the sacrifices in life and treasure," declaring, "If NATO needs me, I'm there." Australia's Socialist Alternative publicly denounced "knee-jerk anti-imperialism."

Since that time, the ISO and its political allies have been the foremost proponents of the US regime-change operation in Syria, proclaiming the US-backed insurgency a "popular revolution," and comparing the CIA-backed White Helmets propaganda operation to a "humanitarian NGO."

In 2011, the US government moved to incorporate identity and lifestyle issues as instruments of foreign policy, which culminated in the embrace of gender and identity politics as a centerpiece of Hillary Clinton's 2016 election campaign.

Groups and publications like the ISO, *Jacobin* and others have fully embraced the #MeToo movement, which has been used to carry out a systematic campaign to undermine due process under the guise of opposing sexual assault. In many ways, the genesis of this right-wing movement lay with the charges against Assange, which set an example for how false or unsubstantiated allegations of sexual assault could be used to promote the policy aims of the Democratic Party and the ruling class as a whole

The abandonment of Assange by these groups is a reflection, fundamentally, of their class basis. They are organizations of the upper-middle class that, whatever their socialist rhetoric, support American imperialism and the capitalist system. Genuine opposition to the attack on democratic rights, and support for Assange, must be rooted in a different social force, connecting the fight for Assange's freedom to the building of a mass socialist movement against inequality and imperialist war.



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